

U.S. Seeking To Exchange Education Data With Russia

By JAMES MacNEE
 (Washington Bureau of The Sun)

Washington, Dec. 13—Marion R. Folsom, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, disclosed today that the United States has been negotiating with the Soviet Union "for many months" in an effort to arrange an exchange of education specialists with that nation.

Secretary Folsom made the disclosure in a letter to Senator Fulbright (D., Ark.), which sought to allay the Senator's expressed fears that not enough is being done to gain "a better understanding of Soviet education."

Folsom said the negotiations were being carried on through the State Department. He said he was hopeful that the director of the division of international education of the Office of Education soon will be allowed to visit the Soviet Union for purposes of arranging such an interchange.

Most Constructive, He Says

"We believe that this is the most constructive next step we can take to improve our knowledge of Soviet education," Folsom said.

Senator Fulbright, on December 2, wrote Folsom saying he was disturbed by public statements of Mrs. Eleanor Lowman, one of the authors of the department's recently published 2-year study of the Soviet education system, which alleged that editing of her manuscript resulted in "suppression, inaccuracy, distortion, and delay of material of national import."

Folsom's answer, made public today, said it is almost inevitable that there would be some disagreement among students of the Soviet education system regarding its precise nature.

However, he added, "there has been no suppression or withholding of significant, accurate, or objective information available on this subject."

That study, for example, said that by the end of the tenth grade a Russian pupil has had five years of physics and biology, four years of chemistry, one year of astronomy and ten years of mathematics.

By contrast, the study noted that fewer than one third of the secondary school graduates in the United States have had more than one year of chemistry, only one tenth have had any advance mathematics and one fourth have studied physics.

In twenty years Russia has lowered the number of pupils per teacher from 17 while

the United States average is still well above 27 per teacher.

Secretary Folsom told Fulbright that in light of Russia's recent accomplishments the American people want "additional and continuing" information on the Soviet system. He said his department has been discussing budget increases with the President for its comparative education branch.

Limits Noted

He added, however, that no matter how well staffed the comparative education branch is, "our understanding of and ability to evaluate Soviet education is limited by a lack of first-hand acquaintance with actual practice."

Folsom denied there was lack of co-operation between the various Government departments on the subject of Soviet education. In fact, he wrote Fulbright, "Effective co-operation exists among them in matters of mutual concern, including their concern in Soviet education developments, and we have attempted to answer fully all inquiries from such agencies regarding Soviet educational practice."

Folsom further denied that "official statements" have tended to deprecate Russian achievements and thus "contribute to an air of complacency" in the United States.

He cited the launching of the Soviet education study two years ago as itself showing the importance his department attaches to keeping the American people acquainted with the available facts.

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